

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 194648

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ORIGIN ITFE-00

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 DHA-02 ORM-01 AID-05 HEW-02 IO-10

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SCA-01 INSE-00 /075 R

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P 152330Z AUG 75

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 194648

E.O. 11652: GDS

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TAGS: SREF

SUBJECT: AUSTRALIAN ADMISSION OF INDOCHINA REFUGEES

REF: A. CANBERRA 3041 (NOTAL); B. CANBERRA 5489 (NOTAL)

FOR THE CHARGE

1. AS YOU ARE AWARE, THE USG HAS HOPED THAT OTHER CONCERNED NATIONS, INCLUDING AUSTRALIA, WOULD ASSIST IN A SIGNIFICANT WAY IN THE RESETTLEMENT OF INDOCHINA REFUGEES. THE U.S. IS BEARING THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF THIS BURDEN, AND DOES NOT CONTEST ITS RESPONSIBILITY TO DO SO, BUT IS ALSO ANXIOUS THAT OTHERS DO WHAT WILL APPEAR IN THE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 STATE 194648

EYES OF WORLD AND THE U.S. AS SOMETHING APPROACHING A FAIR

SHARE. IT WAS IN THIS SPIRIT THAT THE SUBJECT WAS RAISED DURING PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM'S VISIT WITH PRESIDENT FORD MAY 7. AT THAT TIME WHITLAM STATED TO THE PRESIDENT THAT AUSTRALIA WOULD ACCEPT ABOUT HALF AS MANY REFUGEES AS CANADA. EMBASSY CANBERRA LATER REPORTED (CANBERRA 3041) THAT WHITLAM SPOKE IN THE BELIEF THAT CANADA WOULD TAKE ABOUT 3,000, SO THAT AUSTRALIA'S SHARE WOULD BE ABOUT 1,500. RENOUF, HOWEVER, ADDED THAT IF CANADA TOOK 5,000, AUSTRALIA MIGHT TAKE 2,500.

2. IN ACTUAL FACT, ACCORDING TO OUR BEST INFORMATION, INCLUDING UNHCR AND ICEM REPORTS, CANADA HAS SO FAR TAKEN IN A TOTAL OF 5,600 REFUGEES, SOME 1,000 OF WHOM WERE ALREADY STRANDED IN CANADA, AND 4,600 WHO CAME FROM OUTSIDE. AT THE SAME TIME, INSOFAR AS WE KNOW, AUSTRALIA HAS TAKEN IN ONLY ABOUT 350 AND HAS PLANS FOR ONLY 300 MORE. WE STRONGLY HOPE THAT THIS IS NOT THE FULL STORY, AND THAT THE GOA INTENDS TO GO AHEAD ON THE LINES STATED TO THE PRESIDENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER.

3. THERE ARE STILL ABOUT 20,000 REFUGEES STRANDED IN EAST ASIAN COUNTRIES. OF THESE, THE U.S. IS PLANNING TO TAKE ABOUT 7,000, IN ADDITION TO THE 130,000 WHOM WE HAVE ALREADY TAKEN IN. WHILE WE REALIZE THAT AUSTRALIA MAY NOT BE PREPARED FOR A MASSIVE INFLUX OF REFUGEES, WE HOPE THAT STEPS WILL BE TAKEN URGENTLY TO ASSIST AT LEAST MARGINALLY IN THE COMMON EFFORT. AS STARTERS, THERE ARE ABOUT 100 REFUGEES STILL IN AMERICAN CAMPS (INCLUDING 80 ON GUAM) WHO HAVE SPECIFIED AUSTRALIA AS THEIR PREFERRED DESTINATION. WE WOULD HOPE THAT GOA WOULD GIVE SPECIAL CONSIDERATION TO THESE PEOPLE WHO HAVE A PARTICULAR DESIRE TO SETTLE IN AUSTRALIA. NEXT THERE ARE SEVERAL HUNDRED EACH LEFT IN MALAYSIA AND SINGAPORE AND MORE THAN A THOUSAND IN HONG KONG, AFTER ALLOWANCE FOR THE NUMBERS THE U.S. IS TAKING FROM THESE LOCATIONS. WE WONDER WHETHER AUSTRALIA'S SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH MALAYSIA, SINGAPORE, AND HONG KONG MIGHT NOT INDUCE THE GOVERNMENT TO MAKE A RENEWED EFFORT TO TAKE IN THESE LAST REMAINING GROUPS.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 STATE 194648

4. THERE WILL STILL BE OTHER REFUGEES WHO HAVE COME INITIALLY TO THE U.S. AND WHO WOULD PREFER FOR VARIOUS REASONS TO SETTLE IN AUSTRALIA, AND THERE ARE GROUPS IN OTHER EAST ASIAN COUNTRIES, NOTABLY THAILAND, WHO WILL NEED RESETTLING. THE USG WILL CONTINUE TO DO ITS BEST FOR ALL OF THESE, AND HOPES THAT THE GOA WILL DO THE SAME IN LINE WITH THE STATEMENT OF THE PRIME MINISTER TO THE PRESIDENT, AT LEAST UP TO A FIGURE HALF OF THAT OF CANADA,

WHICH WOULD MEAN A TOTAL OF SOME 2,500 TO 2,750.

5. YOU SHOULD SEEK THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE APPOINTMENT WITH RENOUF OR AT A SIMILARLY HIGH LEVEL IN THE GOA TO MAKE THE ABOVE POINTS AND TO EMPHASIZE THE EXPECTATION OF THE USG THAT AUSTRALIA WILL CARRY OUT WHAT APPEARED TO US AS A COMMITMENT. YOU MAY INDICATE THAT WE UNDERSTAND THAT DECISIONS ON THIS MATTER ARE PROBABLY MADE BY THE PRIME MINISTER HIMSELF, AND WE HOPE THAT YOUR REPRESENTATIONS WILL BE DULY COMMUNICATED TO HIM IF THAT IS THE CASE.

6. PLEASE REPORT URGENTLY ON THE AUSTRALIAN REACTION, AS OTHER DECISIONS HINGE TO SOME EXTENT ON THEIR ACTION. IN ANY EVENT, WE WOULD HOPE TO HAVE THEIR DEFINITIVE REPLY BY THE END OF NEXT WEEK. SISCO

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